MONTANA'S STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

December 2013 Volume 2 Issue 2

30-Day Public Comment Period Begins Soon

Montana's State Wildlife Action Plan draft will be released for a 30-day public review in January. If you are receiving this newsletter electronically, you will receive an announcement via email.

If you are receiving a hard copy of this newsletter, you will receive a letter in the mail announcing the public comment period. However, if you prefer to receive an email announcement, please let us know at mtswap@mt.gov.

As always, we encourage you to share this newsletter and future announcements with your entire staff, membership, or mailing lists. We appreciate your help getting this information out.

For more information and updates, please visit the SWAP revision webpage at http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/conservationInAction/.

Smooth Greensnake

State Wildlife Action Plan Progress Update

Over the past several months, the technical teams have been identifying current impacts and future threats to Species and Community Types of Greatest Conservation Need. The teams also have identified associated conservation actions to reduce those impacts and threats.

It was no easy task, but we are getting there! And we need your help!

When you receive the announcement for the 30-day public review, follow the link to the website. You can comment on the entire document or just parts you feel more comfortable with.

Know your fish, mammals, birds, or herps? Check out the impacts, threats, and actions for Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)!

Know habitats? Review the impacts, threats, and actions for Community Types!

Whatever your expertise or interest, we want to hear from you. Looking forward to your comments in January!

Montana's State Wildlife Action Plan outlines conservation actions that will minimize or mitigate the current impacts and future threats of Community Types of Greatest Conservation Need.

Implementing an action on a landscape scale (i.e., Community Type), may benefit numerous Species of Greatest Conservation Need at once. With limited funding, a landscape approach is far better than employing actions that are species specific.

Shortnose Gar

All of the Pieces Are Important

Bruce Auchly, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Several decades ago, I took apart a 1973 Ford Maverick engine. For the mechanically inclined – I'm not but occasionally I qualify under a special dispensation – the engine had a blown head gasket.

After I finished putting everything back together, I had an odd piece of metal left over. It was a small L-shaped bracket, kind of like a bracket used to hold a shelf to a wall, but much, much shorter. I think I still have it in the bottom of my tool box.

It's never good to reassemble a machine and have parts left over, though believe me when I say I've done it more than once.

In this case, I went to a mechanic, part in hand, and asked, what the heck.

As I recall he said it fit near where the gas line entered the carburetor and was meant to prevent vapor lock. I'm sure I stared at him blankly, so he smiled and said as long as the car runs I probably didn't need it.

I'm reminded of that story every time I go hunting in the fall and see a bird or some wee mammal I'm not hunting. As long as the engine runs, do we really need it?

Sometimes the question is what is necessary and what's not when it comes to wildlife and the land. Maybe the better question is why choose?

For every plant there is an herbivore. For every herbivore there is a carnivore. And in the end there are scavengers for all. Although some of the relationships are not so easily connected.

For example, Montana's mixed grass prairie hosts a variety of animals, some bigger, think antelope; some smaller, think bobolink.

Each species is part of the complex whole. Take away the bobolink with its yellow-hooded head, black face and bubbling, gurgling, "bobolink" call and an antelope hunter might not notice the difference but the entire prairie has been degraded.

The same holds true when a prairie is bulldozed and with it a sage grouse lek or a prairie marsh is drained and a population of plains spadefoot toad disappears. Eventually we risk vapor lock; the land mechanism seizes up, refuses to run.

Or take the black-tailed prairie dog, a Great Plains native, feasting on the short grasses that grew in the dry environment. Atop the mounds next to their underground burrows, prairie dogs can see predators from afar, such as coyotes and bobcats.

So predators adapted. Raptors drop from the sky like lightning bolts. Badgers go underground. Who needs prairie dogs? Lots of parts of the prairie engine depend on the barking rodent.

Just because we don't understand the purpose of a bird, reptile or mammal doesn't mean it's not important. One shouldn't discard parts he deems unnecessary whether it's the unknown pieces of the land mechanism or the odds and ends of a mechanic's workshop.

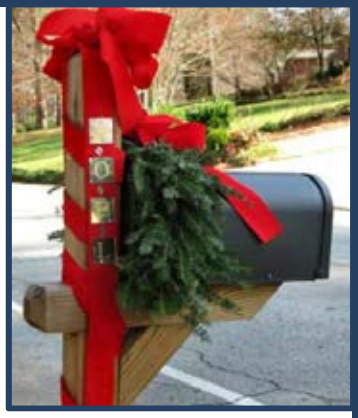
Every home handyman has jars or even boxes of cogs and wheels, bits and pieces. Maybe that's why I still have that little odd-shaped piece of metal in my tool box, though the Ford long ago went to the recyclers.

Identifying Community Types of Greatest Conservation Need (CTGCN)

Aquatic: All rivers and streams were identified as CTGCN, but not all lakes and reservoirs were equal in value for SGCN conservation. Only lakes and reservoirs that were identified as critical to part or all of the life cycle of at least one SGCN were included as a CTGCN.

Terrestrial: Though a community type may occur across the entire state, it was clear that it may not be equally valuable or equally threatened across its entire distribution. To be able to identify the differences in values or threats, the technical team considered geography when identifying terrestrial CTGCN. Though three community types were considered to be in greatest conservation need across their entire distribution, most were not.

If you are receiving this newsletter via Postal Service, please contact Deb with your email address to receive this electronically. It will help FWP cut costs and paper use. Thanks!



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Newsletter link:
http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/conservationInAction/resources.html

Aquatic Community Types of Greatest Conservation Need

Throughout Montana:
Intermountain Valley Rivers
Intermountain Valley Streams
Mixed Systems
Mountain Streams
Prairie Rivers
Prairie Streams

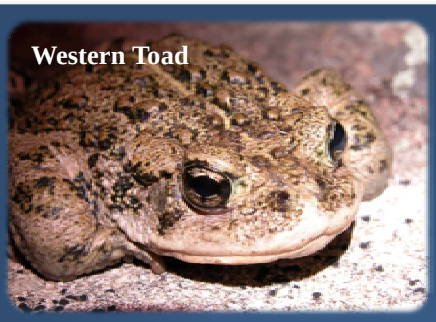
52- Lowland Lakes
12- Lowland Reservoirs
36- Mountain Lakes
1- Mountain Reservoir

Terrestrial Community Types of Greatest Conservation Need

Throughout Montana:
Floodplain and Riparian
Open Water
Wetlands

Portions of Montana:
Alpine Grassland and Shrubland
Alpine Sparse or Barren
Conifer-dominated Forest and Woodland (mesic-wet)
Conifer-dominated Forest and Woodland (xeric-mesic)
Deciduous Dominated Forest and Woodland
Deciduous Shrubland
Lowland/Prairie Grassland
Montane Grassland
Sagebrush-dominated Shrubland
Sagebrush Steppe
Scrub and Dwarf Shrubland

Freezeout Lake Wildlife Management Area



Western Toad

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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

PO Box 200701
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Harlequin Ducks